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ALABAMA SENATE ELECTION

As Dems add seat, GOP casts blame over failure

BY SEAN SULLIVAN, ELISE VIEBECK, DAVID WEIGEL AND MICHAEL SCHERER
Washington Post

BIRMINGHAM, ALA.

Stunned Republicans began casting blame Wednesday over their failure to hold a Senate seat in the Deep South, where Alabama Democrat Doug Jones stitched together just enough support to win amid backlash to accusations of sexual misconduct against his firebrand GOP rival.

Even as Republican Roy Moore – down by more than 20,000 votes in Tuesday's special election – refused to concede the race, members of the GOP began pointing fingers at one another for his defeat after being steamrolled in Virginia's elections last month.

The recriminations highlighted the bitter divisions within the GOP that appear to be worsening as the party looks toward defending its Senate majority in 2018, a task made more difficult by Moore's loss and an increasingly unpopular President Donald Trump.

The blow in Tuesday's election also highlighted voter dismay over allegations that Moore pursued romantic relationships with teenage girls while in his 30s, as well as the limits of Trump's political influence.

Democrats celebrated their victory and called for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to delay a vote on the GOP tax plan until after Jones is sworn in.

"It would be wrong for Senate Republicans to jam through this tax bill without giving the newly elected senator from Alabama the opportunity to cast his vote," Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said at a news conference on Capitol Hill. Schumer said he had spoken to Jones but did not ask him how he would vote on the measure.

Meanwhile, Republican lawmakers, strategists and party figures picked sides: either with McConnell, who kept his distance from Moore's campaign, or with former White House chief strategist Stephen Bannon, who was among Moore's most ardent backers.

In a tweet, even Trump suggested that Moore had been a weak candidate, a tacit rebuke of Bannon's support. Trump also tried to defend his track record by saying he knew Moore would lose, though he campaigned for him in the final weeks.

"Wish we would have gotten the seat," the president later

SEE ALABAMA, 3A

PHOTOS BY DAVIE HINSHAW dhinshaw@charlotteobserver.com

Pat McCrory, former Charlotte mayor and North Carolina governor, collects donations at the annual Good Fellows Club fundraising event at the Charlotte Convention Center on Wednesday. Founded in 1917 in Charlotte, the Good Fellows Club has more than 1,700 members in the greater Charlotte area who seek to be of service to working families in need.

HOLIDAY FUNDRAISER

Charlotte's Good Fellows raise $5,600 per minute

BY MARK PRICE
msprice@charlotteobserver.com

The century-old Charlotte brotherhood known as The Good Fellows set an attendance record Wednesday, when members of the all-male club gathered to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for Charlotte's neediest families. More than 1,741 men – along with Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles – attended the annual event at the Charlotte Convention Center, which is famous for its rapid-fire fundraising.

The Good Fellows have raised more than $836,000 this year. Of that, $335,573 was given during the luncheon. That amounts to about $5,600 per minute during the affair.

Good Fellows President Mac Everett said it was the record crowd – about 200 more than in 2016 – that represented a milestone. Many of the seats were filled by newcomers, including younger men and minorities, and a record 300 of them signed up Wednesday to become standing members. Everett wants to believe that will help one of Charlotte's longest-running traditions survive for generations to come.

"Charlotte has changed tremendously since this group was created and we are looking for a broader base, younger and more diverse, that represents the city," said Everett, one of Charlotte's best known civic leaders. "We are 101 years old and we want to be going another 100 years from now, so this is critical for us....We want to keep our traditions going."

The attendees included some of the most influential men in the city, among them former North Carolina governor Pat McCrory, who was also the Charlotte's former mayor; Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Kerr Putney; Mecklenburg County Sheriff Irwin Carmichael; Carolinas HealthCare CEO Gene Woods; and PGA Tour golfer Webb Simpson.

Everett, a retired Charlotte bank executive, told the crowd its goal was to raise enough money to match the club's level of giving over the past year,

SEE GOOD FELLOWS, 2A

People drop cash into buckets as they leave the annual Good Fellows Club Christmas fundraising event.

LOCAL

SHOOTING VICTIM IS HONORED

Jamil Swedat got the Above and Beyond Award for testimony that sent the man who shot him to prison. 4A

BUSINESS

ALLY CFO TO STAY IN CHARLOTTE

Jennifer LaClair is joining Ally Financial as its new chief financial officer, and she will be working here in Charlotte. 7A

SPORTS

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College football bowl season means it's time to get into the spirit of the games to come with a guide from A to Z. 1B

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